



A bold voice for transportation workers

May 8, 2019

TTD Urges Support for “Full Utilization of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund” Act

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I want to offer our strong support for the “Full Utilization of the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund” Act (H.R. 2440) and thank Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Ranking Member Sam Graves (R-MO), Subcommittee Chair Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Subcommittee Ranking Member Bruce Westerman (R-AR) and Representative Mike Kelly (R-PA) for introducing this important and timely legislation. This bipartisan bill will finally unlock the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF) for its intended purpose and will pave the way for sorely needed port and harbor improvement projects, promote good paying jobs, and provide a boost to the national economy. We urge Members of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to vote yes when it is considered later today.

The Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund places a tax on cargo from vessels utilizing our ports and harbors, and these funds are meant to be spent on projects which improve those facilities. This revenue should ensure our domestic seaports remain competitive in the global economy, particularly as we witness substantial increases in cargo volumes and the development and widespread use of larger Panamax and Post-Panamax vessels. Unfortunately, for over 30 years Congress has placed ill-conceived budgetary restrictions on the use of these funds, and allowed HMT revenues to be diverted for purposes wholly unrelated to the maintenance of our ports and harbors.

HR 2440 puts an end to the misuse and underuse of the HMTF. First, it allows Congress to spend out the \$9.3 billion balance that sits idly in the Trust Fund. It is unconscionable that billions of dollars have been allowed to accumulate in the fund while critical dredging and maintenance needs across the country are left unmet, for no better reason than accounting gimmicks.

The legislation further creates a clear path for Congress to annually expend the entirety of the revenue the Trust Fund receives, on the type of projects for which it was intended. Together, these critical changes will allow for transformational improvements to the American shipping industry, and create meaningful job growth in the longshore and port dredging sectors.

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO

815 16th Street NW / 4th Floor / Washington DC 20006

Tel: 202.628.9262 / Fax: 202.628.0391 / www.ttd.org

Larry I. Willis, President / Greg Regan, Secretary-Treasurer



The benefits of full utilization of the HMTF will go well beyond the boundaries of our ports. In our deeply interconnected intermodal freight system, the benefits first reaped at ports and harbors will be quickly felt by the rail workers, truck drivers, and others who move cargo across the country, as well as the consumers at the goods' ultimate destinations. The crucial reforms of H.R. 2440 will have a cascading effect across the domestic economy and the transportation workforce.

Once again, I thank Members of the Committee for their leadership on this important bill, and urge Members to support its passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry I. Willis".

Larry I. Willis
President